

Facilitator Notes for White Privilege

Before the meeting

This session has a Sharing Activity after the Shared Readings – “The Walk.” You should familiarize yourself with how “The Walk” works so that you can lead it at the meeting. On an internet search, type in “What is Privilege? YouTube” for directions on The Walk. (*If you have trouble figuring out how to do all this, contact the Covenant Group Steering Committee or other facilitators*). When you understand how “The Walk” works, think about the room your group meets in and try to visualize the activity. You may want to go into the hallway if you are in the Family Room, or arrive a little early to move some furniture around to accommodate this activity. When you do “The Walk,” you may not want to use the handholding that is shown in some versions.

Gathering

Words of the Day

I experience white privilege when I ...

Chalice Lighting

We light this chalice to shine on our time together. In its light we celebrate the relationships and understanding we are creating in this place and time. May our sharing be deep. (Light chalice)

The Basket

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support

Shared Readings

For some white people, the words “white privilege” elicit an uneasy feeling because, for them, the term is accusatory without being specific. White privilege *does not* mean that any white person who achieved anything didn’t work hard for it. It is an irrefutable, concrete phenomenon that manifests itself in real, measurable values, and we should use it as such. *Michael Harriot*

[White privilege] I think is a word that we have created to make white people comfortable – while we talk about racism, and white supremacy, which is much more uncomfortable for folks because it names things and it’s very, very direct. *Ta-Nehisi Coates*

White people’s lack of consciousness about their racial identities has grave consequences in that it not only denies white people the experience of seeing themselves as benefiting from racism, but in doing so, frees them from taking responsibility for eradicating it. *Alice McIntyre*

There is a strange kind of enigma associated with the problem of racism. No one, or almost no one, wishes to see themselves as racist; still, racism persists, real and tenacious. *Albert Memmi, Racism*

A part of us likes having white power and privilege ... Consciously or unconsciously we accept this special treatment. I know there is a part of me that does. There is a part of us that loves our white power and privilege. Otherwise there would be a lot more effort to end it. *Tim Wise*

In short, white people can continue to use unearned privilege to remain ignorant, or we can determine to put aside our opacities in order to see clearly and live differently. *Frances E. Kendall*

But we who are white don't have to think about being white. By not thinking about it, we also do not have to think about the issue of racism and the benefits it gives to us as white people. Racism is designed to work without our thinking about it. *Joseph R. Barndt*

We have only begun to know
the power that is in us if we would join
our solitudes in the communion of the struggle.
Denise Levertov

What I ask my white students to do, and what I ask of you, my dear friends, is to try, the best you can, to surrender your innocence, to reject the willful denial of history, and to live fully in our complicated present with all of the discomfort it brings. *Michael Eric Dyson*

The Sharing Activity, "The Walk," is on the next page.

Sharing Activity

The Walk. Line up side by side in a space large enough for each person to take eight or ten steps forwards or backwards.

Read: I'm going to read a series of statements one by one. At each statement, group members will step forward, stand still, or step backward according to how the statement applies to them.

This session is about white privilege, but many of these statements could apply to privilege of different kinds. People may have experienced these situations because of their gender or sexual preference, their social class or the region where they grew up, or even their physical appearance. You can consider how the statements might apply to your own experience and then go on to consider how they might apply to a person of color.

1. If you have been discriminated against, or verbally or physically abused because of your appearance, take a step back.
2. If the primary language spoken in your household is not English, take one step back.
3. If you've ever tried to change your speech or mannerisms to gain acceptance, take one step back.
4. If you ever felt embarrassed about your clothes or house while growing up, take one step back.
5. If people have blamed your mistakes on your gender/ethnicity, take one step back.
6. If you are reasonably sure you would be hired for a job based on your ability and qualifications, take one step forward.
7. If you had a job during your high school or college years, take one step back.
8. If you have ever felt like there was not an adequate or accurate representation of a group you identify with in the media, take one step back.
9. If you were ever offered a job because of your association with a friend or family member, take one step forward.
10. If you can go anywhere in the country, and easily find the kinds of hair products you need and/or cosmetics that match your skin color, take one step forward.
11. If there were more than 50 books in your house growing up, take one step forward.
12. If you would never think twice about calling the police when trouble occurs, take one step forward.
13. If anyone has told you that you shouldn't pursue higher education, take one step back.
14. If you get time off for your religious holidays, take one step forward.
15. If your city's government and police look like you, take one step forward.

Look around at where you are.

Then re-form the circle to continue with the covenant group session.

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round 1: Share your reflections on white privilege and the preparation materials.

Round 2: Share additional thoughts or reflect on what others have shared.

Closing Circle

Extinguishing the Chalice

We extinguish this flame and we remember the warmth of our community, the light of our wisdom, the generosity of our sharing. We keep these in our heart until we meet again.

(Extinguish the chalice.)

Song/Chime

Announcements

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to let the facilitator know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share with the facilitator the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, giving advice, or advocating a specific view
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn and to stay on the “I-message.”