

Congratulations! You've already made it to **Week 3 of the 14-Week Equity Challenge!**

Before we get going, be sure to check out the calendar update at the end of this document as there is an upcoming event this week at the Castellani Art Museum in which the participants in our challenge may be interested. Also, heading into Week 3 is a good time to remind you that reflecting and journaling is a crucial piece of the challenge. Plan to take time every day to reflect on what you chose to do, what you're learning, and how you are feeling. Difficult emotions such as shame and anger, though uncomfortable to feel, can guide you to deeper self-awareness about how power and privilege impacts you and the people in your life.

If you are someone who needs a little structure, check out the 14-Week Equity Challenge Tracking Tool on our website. Actually, continue to use all of the resources available on the Challenge home page at [www.uwgn.org/equity](http://www.uwgn.org/equity). There you will also find the content for the first two weeks, so if you are just joining us, it should be pretty easy to get caught up. Again, browse the materials and give us whatever time you may have available. This week's topic is Understanding Privilege. The creators of the original 21-Day Equity Challenge believe that understanding privilege and white supremacy offers a powerful lens into the complexities of doing social justice work, so let's jump in.

Privilege is the unearned social, political, economic, and psychological benefits of membership in a group that has institutional and structural power. (SOURCE: [YWCA](#))

It is very likely that everyone participating in this Challenge has at least one privilege. Let's explore:

- Can you expect time off from work or school to celebrate your religious holidays?
- Can you comfortably walk down the street holding your partner's hand?
- Can you use public bathrooms without stares, fear or anxiety?
- Can you enter a building without having to worry about where the elevator is?
- Can you plan a trip to a city without worrying whether the sidewalks are maintained?
- Can you go to a store and purchase products (e.g., band aids) that match your skin tone?

Privilege means living and existing in a world where standards and rules are premised upon the dominant group's needs, wants and desires. Having privilege means that you are receiving something that may be denied to other people based solely on the different social categories to which they belong. It also means you have fewer barriers to overcome to be successful. And while it may give you an advantage, it is not a guarantee of success.

We most often hear about privilege when it comes to race or gender, but privilege also exists for different groups based on class, ability status, education level, religion, sexuality, marital status, among others. To consider the breadth and scope of areas of privilege, you should revisit the social identity wheel from [Week 2](#).

The National Conference for Community and Justice offers definitions for a number of different types of privilege [here](#). We also want to note that we have a regional NCCJ office right here in WNY. The mission of the National Federation for Just Communities of Western New York is, overcoming racism, bias and discrimination by building understanding, respect and trust through education, advocacy and community involvement. Check out their many trainings and programs [here](#).

Privilege can be experienced on personal, interpersonal and institutional levels. The social, economic, political and psychological unearned advantages that privileged groups hold come at the expense of marginalized groups. Within the United States, members of social groups that hold privileges (white, male, wealthy, able-bodied, etc.) have historically held dominance and power over targeted groups.

Once someone acknowledges their privilege, they can move forward in leveraging that privilege to confront societal and institutional discrimination. Some ways a person can leverage their privilege are to have brave conversations with family and friends, advocate for folks without the same privileges, and utilize bystander intervention techniques to support someone you see being harassed because of their identity.

## **READ**

### **[5 Types of Privilege You Probably Have No Idea You're Benefiting From](#)**

This quick and basic introductory article describes five pretty common types of privilege, ones that we might not even know that we have. The article concludes by saying that having privilege is nothing to be ashamed of, but it is something to be aware of. (About a 3-Minute Read)

### **[White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#)**

Groundbreaking 1989 essay by Peggy McIntosh who lists the ways she's beginning to recognize the way white privilege operates in her life. While you can find this article in any number of places, please go to the National SEED Project to find the official electronic posting. You can also hear an interview with Peggy McIntosh in the Teaching While White podcast episode in the Listen section. (About a 20-Minute Read)

### **[Explaining White Privilege to a Broke White Person](#)**

In a more modern and contextualized Huffington Post article from 2014, privileged cisgender woman, author and advocate, Gina Crosley-Corcoran, offers that "recognizing privilege simply means being aware that some people have to work much harder just to experience the things you take for granted (if they ever can experience them at all)." (About a 4-Minute Read)

### **[Use Your Everyday Privilege to Help Others](#)**

This Harvard Business Review commentary explains how most people have some kind of 'ordinary privilege' - the ability to forget about aspects of who you are because they represent the majority demographics of your country or organization. The author argues that instead of feeling bad about it, people should use it to speak up on behalf of those without it. (About a 3-Minute Read)

## WATCH

### [Students Learn a Powerful Lesson about Privilege](#)

There are any number of active exercises you can adopt to illustrate the power of privilege. This very brief 2-minute video posted by Kirkwood University mimics a popular experiential learning activity that you can often find in these challenges - the privilege walk - where participants respond to a series of questions and either take a step forward or back depending on their answer. We don't promote the privilege walk here because, as blogger Meg Bulger observes, "Privilege walks rely on the experiences of people with marginalized identities to create a powerful learning experience for people with privilege." (About 2 Minutes)

NOTE: A couple of additional tools you might consider are:

["Privilege for Sale"](#) – An exercise that doesn't rely on participant public self-disclosure.

["How Privileged Are You?"](#) – A sample (from BuzzFeed) self-assessment instrument designed to discover where you are on the spectrum of privilege.

### [MTV Decoded: Why Does Privilege Make People So Angry?](#)

MTV Decoded host Franchesca Ramsey explains why bringing attention to someone's privilege shouldn't be read as a personal attack and why discussing privilege isn't assigning blame, but is raising awareness. (About 5 Minutes)

### [Recognizing Privilege: Power to All People](#)

In this TEDx Talk, educator Mike Yates introduces people to the Culture of Power (coined by Lisa Delpit) as he speaks about recognizing privilege and the fact that power structures exist all around us. He believes if we can help young people view themselves in a different way then we can all come together in power. (About 14 minutes)

### [Deconstructing White Privilege](#)

In this presentation, sponsored by the United Methodist Church, anti-racist educator Robin DiAngelo discusses unequal and institutional racial power as she breaks down white privilege. DiAngelo, author of [White Fragility](#), has been conducting anti-racist trainings for more than 20 years and has witnessed the racial stress and defensiveness and even justifications of racism demonstrated by participants in her workshops.

## **LISTEN**

### **[Teaching While White: Episode 3: Whiteness Visible – Part 1](#)**

One of our goals in this Challenge is to introduce participants to an array of resources that they may find useful in their own equity work. This week we introduce the *Teaching While White* Podcast. TWW seeks to move the conversation forward on how to be consciously, intentionally, anti-racist in the classroom. In Episode 3: Whiteness Visible – Part 1, we hear from Peggy McIntosh, author of, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, and also Debby Irving, author of *Waking Up White*. Both guests reflect on why they feel it is important to make whiteness visible. The episode begins with the question, is it possible to be a good teacher without really understanding your own racial identity? (About 52 minutes)

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## **CALENDER UPDATE**

### **Orange Shirt Day Event at the Castellani Art Museum (CAM)**

#### **FILM – Unseen Tears (Screening and Discussion with the Filmmaker)**

This week, on Thursday, September 21, from 4:00pm-7:00pm, The Castellani Art Museum will host a screening and discussion of the film [Unseen Tears](#). Survivors of the Thomas Indian School and the Mohawk Institute discuss the abuse they endured and the systematic assault on their language and culture. The program will educate visitors about the history of residential schools as well as the challenges in sharing those difficult/challenging narratives. The event includes a discussion with the filmmaker.

The link to register for the event is [here](#).