



January 13, 2016

AdChoices   
AdChoices 

Featuring fresh takes and real-time analysis from  
HuffPost's signature lineup of contributors

HOT ON THE BLOG

[David Stockman](#)[Robert Reich](#)[Peter Salovey](#)[Shannon Watts](#)**Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer**[Become a fan](#)

President of the United Church of Christ, author of two books,  
Doctorate in White Privilege, Shalom Award recipient for peace  
commitments

# An Open Letter to White Men in America

Posted: 07/24/2015 12:03 pm EDT | Updated: 07/24/2015 5:59 pm EDT



Dear White Men,

You are persons of privilege.

You didn't earn it. More than likely aren't yet prepared to either admit to it or lose it. This letter, written by one of you, is offered to invite you on a journey of insight, honesty, hard truth and just living.

Privilege can be hard to see, mostly because of what doesn't happen to us when we have it.

One of the four reasons James Cone offers in his landmark essay "[Theology's Great Sin: Silence in the Face of White Supremacy](#)" for why men of privilege remain silent in the face of so much racial injustice is: "They don't have to speak."

We aren't getting arrested at four times our population rate.

We aren't being followed when walking through a department store wearing a sweat shirt with a hood.

Real estate agencies didn't write codes, rules and laws that kept us out of the high rent districts and middle class neighborhoods.

Property values don't go down when more than 10 percent of our neighborhood is saturated with people of our race.

Our children aren't sitting in classrooms with teachers who are likely not to have even a minor degree in the courses they are teaching.

Young white men are not being gunned down by black police officers in epidemic numbers.

Our churches aren't being burned to the ground, nor or our church members in danger of being gunned down in prayer meetings.

We are not saying to ourselves as part of a white man's code of conduct that when a police car drives by us without pulling us over even though we are exceeding the speed limit something like: "Well, once again I didn't get pulled over because I'm white."

We are not saying to ourselves when our child didn't get her college application rejected with a questionable GPA something like: "Well, thank God she's white and that her mother graduated from that school 25 years ago."

We are not saying to ourselves when the prosecutor reduces our son's charges from aggravated assault to loitering and sets him free with a small fine and time served: "Wow, that white prosecutor made sure my white son got a break that the black man who got convicted of that crime last week didn't get."

The journey to seeing and understanding the pernicious consequences of privilege includes the harder work of seeing what isn't there to be seen.

I have started practicing this as a discipline.

When I walk into a convenience store to get a receipt for my gas and the young woman at the counter greets me with a smile and a kind word, I tell myself "She felt comfortable doing that because I'm white."

When I see a highway patrolman pass me by while I'm exceeding the speed limit or, as actually happened two weeks ago, I get pulled over for that and let off without a ticket, I say to myself: "That happened because I'm white."

When I drive through the many border checkpoints we have set up here in the Southwest along the Mexican border, and as I roll down my window and make my stop at the guard gate, and as the border patrol agent simply glances at my face before waging me on with a perfunctory "have a good day," I say to myself: "That is the result of my being white."

I don't know in the end if any of those were in fact true statements. That isn't the point of this exercise. The point is to create a consciousness from which I can no longer let myself escape.

I want to be clear about something. This solves nothing. I can notice, and still be happy and content with the privilege I am afforded.

I want to be clear about something else. Whatever solutions are going to come that we ourselves will offer the agency of our privilege for aren't coming without this basic awareness.

When I taught White Privilege studies to a class of Masters of Divinity students at Eden Theological Seminary, the assignment I left the students with every day was this: "Tell me what you see." There is a passage in my sacred texts that reads: "Let those who have eyes to see, see." There is so much more to be seen than what white men will let their eyes take notice of.

I invite the white men of America with me on this journey of discovery. Ask those who don't share your privilege to tell you what they see. It may not have escaped your attention that whether we are talking about Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, what whites see and what blacks see are not the same thing. There is a reason for that. Privilege comes at a price -- and the price is the loss of a vision that admits facts that make accepting the privilege uncomfortable.

Therefore, I extend an invitation to a seeing that engenders the kind of discomfort with privilege that creates the space necessary for real justice to emerge. Don't worry about carrying the burden of solving this pervasive injustice: for good reason, you and I won't be entrusted with that work. But only when we see what others are more than happy to show us about ourselves will we be open then to hearing what they have to teach us about what will be required for true equality to emerge.

The acceptance of this invitation, and the resulting years of work it will take us all to open our eyes to that we have been conditioned to ignore for the sake of our privilege, is the first step in the proverbial journey of a thousand miles. White men in America, I invite you to walk this road with me.

**Follow Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/johncdorhauer](http://www.twitter.com/johncdorhauer)**

**MORE: [Dorhauer White Privilege](#) [Racism](#) [Racial Equality](#) [White Males](#) [White Male Privilege](#)**

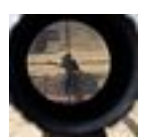
## Conversations

1420 Comments

Sort by



Add a comment...



**William Davis** · Maryville College

Well doctor, you must only be describing a very small amount of us because I

have never felt privileged, and my pay checks do not help me feel privileged either.

Like · Reply ·  1111 · Jul 24, 2015 12:42pm · Edited



**Selena Jackson** · Cincinnati

I don't think I've ever seen someone miss the point more than this. Of course you don't feel it.... that's why you don't realize it exists. It's more about what doesn't happen to you than what does.... and you can't feel what doesn't happen. Did you read this at all?

Like · Reply ·  216 · Jul 24, 2015 10:22am



**Tomas Rodriguez** · Instituto Pio XII Villa Bosch

hehe awww. dont worry buddy you are still a gifted white gentleman.

Like · Reply ·  35 · Jul 24, 2015 10:31am



**Steve McNulty** · University of Southern Maine

Lena Jackson So, your point is that I should believe something exists because you say it does? You want me to contradict my own personal real life experiences for your words? I know that the advantages I have gained in life, what little they are, are the result of the hard work of my poor immigrant grand parents, my parents, and my self. Nobody, outside of my family, has given me anything that I have not earned. I will agree with one point the writer makes, and that is the fact that large city public schools are a disgrace and a great sin of our nation. All students deserve a free and high quality public k-12 education. But I would also like to point out, that those schools are all in large cities, controlled by democrats in the positions of power. If you want to see those schools get better, talk to them. They are the ones with the power to make them better.

Like · Reply ·  852 · Jul 24, 2015 10:33am · Edited

[Show 10 more replies in this thread](#) ▼



**Phil Davis**

This piece is so unenlightening. White privilege (if one wishes to call it that) in the US is the natural order of things just as black, Asian, and Hispanic privilege are the norms in Africa, Asia, Central and South America. If the inequality of privilege is of great concern, those complaining about it need only to move to a country that is dominated by their own race. Warning: If you do you'll find that your opportunities will be far more limited than they are in this country.

Like · Reply ·  137 · Jul 24, 2015 10:22am



**Dennis Daniel** · Las Vegas, Nevada

Phil,

You kind of half get it.....Majorities will prbly have privilege over minorities in most societies.....therefore If blacks were the dominant race in our corner of the world whites would prbly be making a similar argument about black prvlge.....that's the half of this that you seem to understand.....its nothing that you (white folks) do.....its is what it is.....the reason so many get defensive and confused about it is because the prvlge concept just doesn't fit (for the most part) into you self image....(you might want to look into the pschy of self image to understand better)...your feelings are very understandable and predictable.....things might be a little different if you open your eyes to the concept beyond your daily existance.....maybe things will change over time when you actually see the other side of this equation..... because when you work to uplift the underclasses you elevate your own.....

Like · Reply ·  9 · Jul 24, 2015 12:37pm



**Aaron Beauchamp** · Bemidji High School

Dennis Daniel I agree. When we take our eyes of our ourselves, and look to helping others, everybody benefits.....it's just this article is not 100% accurate, and smacks of guilt, accusation and division. White liberals are SUPER at that.



Racism and abuse of power is a fruit of man's fallen nature. It's a sour fruit, not tasty at all, but knows no color lines. I am glad you admit that if roles were reversed, whites would be saying the same thing.

What's the answer? Jesus. The only answer to any ill that plagues man.

Like · Reply ·  32 · Jul 24, 2015 12:48pm



**Sherry Hendershot** · Lead Technical Trainer at 22nd Century Technologies Inc

Dennis Daniel Many Americans are just trying to live their lives, make sure they are as healthy as possible, take care of their children, and make sure there is food on the table. Each person, no matter what their race is has the opportunity to advance here.

Like · Reply ·  6 · Jul 24, 2015 7:39pm

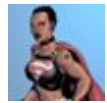
Show 10 more replies in this thread ▼



**Rich Wells**

This blog is racism at its very worst. Pegging White Males in this way is just as racist just as bad as it would be if you said the same applied to black males or women.

Like · Reply ·  689 · Jul 24, 2015 10:23am



**Selena Jackson** · Cincinnati

This doesn't peg anything. It points out something that technically the white men benefit from but don't necessarily do anything to encourage it. It's not something white men or people are DOING...

Like · Reply ·  38 · Jul 24, 2015 11:41am



**Ted Dettmann**

Then what are people expected to do about it?

Like · Reply ·  26 · Jul 24, 2015 11:52am



**Tom Desmond** · Works at Raytheon

No, he's not blaming white men for anything other than a lack of awareness. And he's right about that.

Black people are likely to be perceived differently due to their skin color, and as a white guy I don't have to deal with that. I was reminded of that when I was giving a black coworker some photography tips a couple months back and he hesitated to go places that I'd have never thought about because of how it would be perceived by others that this black guy is walking around taking pictures.

Yes, there are wealthy people who have more privilege than I can even imagine...far more than I'll ever have. But there are also plenty of people who have much less privilege because of their skin color, and that's worth acknowledging. I don't feel guilty about it, because I didn't create it...but I do want to be aware of it.

Like · Reply ·  94 · Jul 24, 2015 11:54am

Show 10 more replies in this thread ▼



**David Klink** · St. Alphonsus

"Whites aren't being arrested at 4 times the population rate"

Yeah but men are incarcerated at 10xs the rate women are. Isn't that a form of "female privilege?" Or will you move the goalposts....again?

Like · Reply ·  226 · Jul 24, 2015 10:56am



**David Mailand** · Arvada, Colorado

nice, and the poor, how many more poor people are arrested compared to rich, must be rich privilege right, people always look external for blame, never is personal behavior and accountability brought into the

equation

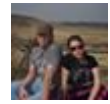
Like · Reply ·  82 · Jul 24, 2015 1:28pm



**Bill Foreman** · University of Oklahoma

I guess you make a point. If privilege is defined by a disparity in arrests versus demographic percentage, then you couldn't deny woman privilege, rich privilege, elder privilege, etc. What your point really does is undermine the rationale for defining privilege by the absence of arrests, which would undermine a central tenet of the "white privilege" theory.

Like · Reply ·  29 · Jul 24, 2015 2:10pm



**Greg M. Brandt**

David Mailand Are you sure must is spelled msut? You're not looking very intelligent!

Like · Reply ·  2 · Jul 24, 2015 2:46pm

[Show 10 more replies in this thread](#) ▼



**We Deserve to know what is in our food**

My white ancestors paid the price for my priviledge. They came to this country and did the jobs that the freed slaves no longer had to do. They worked to bring their families over and to learn the ways of living in America. They valued family and education. They valued following the law. I have nothing to feel guilty about. NOT.ONE.THING.

Like · Reply ·  69 · Jul 24, 2015 10:43am



**Frank L. Hayes** · President at Hayes & Associates LLC

My ancestors help build this country as slaves. Nobody is asking you to feel guilty but to deny that you do not have privilege as a white man in this country, you are wrong. It wouldn't matter who your parents are, the mere fact that you were born white gives you privilege rather you want to admit it or not

Like · Reply ·  24 · Jul 24, 2015 9:01pm



**Theresa Truesdell** · Tempe, Arizona

It is not about guilt it is about awareness, like when a white man could get on a bus in the South and know he would have a seat no matter how full the bus was with people of color. Or the way you know you will be served in a restaurant or store and not ignored or treated badly. If you can not see you have not looked.

Like · Reply ·  11 · Jul 25, 2015 1:06am



**Claudius Henry** · Advanced Practice Nurse at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton

My black ancestors built this country and fought in its wars. The Chinese Americans built the railroads. Women of all races fought hard to earn what they have today. These groups are still treated like second class citizens.

Like · Reply ·  6 · Jul 25, 2015 7:29am

[Show 6 more replies in this thread](#) ▼



**Clarissa Hart**

Wow was that crap,

White men, your parents got married, stayed married, had children in wedlock, worked hard, provided for your future, didn't go around breaking the law, and some day you will do the same. It's a legacy each of us can pass on to our children. Through your example, other races that haven't valued these traits may someday grow to do so. Asians already do. They came into this country as immigrants and made the value system their own and pass on legacies to their children as well.

Now there is a group that has no privilege and that's poor white males. There are special abilities for some groups to get into college with vastly lower scores, there are no special grants and loans available for being a poor white males nor are their affirmative action hiring programs where people can get in simply because they're part of a group.

But cheer up. Taxis are more likely to stop for you.

Like · Reply ·  62 · Jul 24, 2015 10:40am



**Randy Winton** · CSUN

This is such a krok. White men aren't 6.5% ( 1/2 of 13%) of the population committing more than 50% of the murders in the US. I don't know what state you live in but the Teacher licensing requirements are the same for schools in predomently black neighborhoods as predominently white neighborhoods where I live. What would happen to your property prices if a poor white trailer park was built next to your neighborhood? BTW--there are blacks in my nice neighborhood with the same kinds of jobs as everyone else around here--nobody gives a hoot. White people aren't shot by black cops as often as ... [See More](#)

Like · Reply ·  409 · Jul 24, 2015 11:02am · Edited



**Cyrus Johnson** · College of Lake County

Thank Randy for comming farword, when you did not have to !

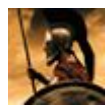
Like · Reply ·  38 · Jul 24, 2015 12:49pm



**Cameron Schwind**

Actually more white people are killed by cops. Just sayin

Like · Reply ·  90 · Jul 24, 2015 2:21pm

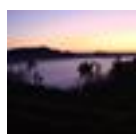


**Manuel Cufre**

Well in fact Hitler had an argument for his stance regarding the jews. You may agree or disagree but Hitler wasn't blaming the jews for any "self inflicted problems".

Like · Reply ·  16 · Jul 24, 2015 2:25pm

[Show 10 more replies in this thread](#) ▼



**Randall Ousley** · Works at Top Secret

Dear Whom It May Concern:

As a white man, I offer this rebuttal to your racist story based upon my own experiences:

Most white men stay in school and get an education.

Most white men do not blame another race for their problems,

Most white men obey the law and show respect for the law.

Most white men stay home and help raise their children.

Most white men do not walk through a store with hoodies, masks or anything else on that might draw suspicion to them.

Most white neighborhoods are filled with men that maintain their property and go to work everyday and show respect for their neighbors.

Most white men show an interest in their child's education and help with homework and make sure they have clean clothes to wear to school.... [See More](#)

Like · Reply ·  55 · Jul 24, 2015 11:50am



**Roy Mike Hemsworth** · Blackduck High School

great comments but will be looked on as attacks...so they wont have to alter their "grasshopper" "ant" scenario

Like · Reply ·  5 · Jul 25, 2015 8:13am



**John Thomson** · Georgia State University

So true, Randall. If it were a White Males vs. all other races then why do we not see the same issue with other groups such as Asians and Eastern Europeans. Probably because their parents take control of their kids and make sure they go to school, obey the law and have respect

kids and make sure they go to school, obey the law and have respect for other people's property. Culture has more to do with it than race. Despite Bill Cosby's current issues, he at least had the courage to call out the issues within the culture that were perpetuating problems such as high incarceration rates, drug abuse and violence.

Like · Reply ·  8 · Jul 25, 2015 9:16am



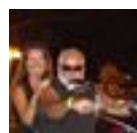
**Jacob Blaustein** · Daemen College

"Most white men obey the law and show respect for the law." Ha ha ha no: <http://rare.us/.../white-on-black-murder-who-really-is.../>  
<http://atlantablackstar.com/.../9-facts-white-white.../3/>

"Most white men stay home and help raise their children." Actually that's most Hispanics and Asians: <http://www.quora.com/Which-race-or-ethnic-group-has-the...>

Like · Reply ·  2 · Jul 25, 2015 5:41pm

Show 2 more replies in this thread ▼



**Kim Pankey** · East Central High School

I'm proud to be White and I have worked for eveyting I have

Like · Reply ·  54 · Jul 24, 2015 10:38am



**Steve Politeo** · Ravensdale, Washington

This is a joke right? He grew up someplace I have never been right? I have worked hard all my life, obeyed the rules, been nice and generous to others as and when I can. Who the hell is this guy? How did this get published?

Like · Reply ·  438 · Jul 24, 2015 10:23am



**Leo Balla** · ITT Technical Institute Columbus, Oh

Agreed, I worked my way through college and I don't break the law. that's why I live in a good neighborhood, have a good job and have never been arrested. It's nothing to do with privilage, it has everything to do with being raised properly, being educated, not being lazy and knowing the difference between right an wrong.

Like · Reply ·  289 · Jul 24, 2015 12:07pm



**Scott Gourley**

Have you ever been denied a job, promotion, raise, housing, a loan, or a good loan rate, ONLY because of the color of your skin?

What world are YOU living in? One where you don't have to open your eyes?

Like · Reply ·  32 · Jul 24, 2015 12:22pm



**Cyrus Johnson** · College of Lake County

Leo Balla I see your point, hope you can see mine ! You never get arrested, that in itself is a privilage ! How many blacks get arrested simple for being black? Think about that !

Like · Reply ·  16 · Jul 24, 2015 12:26pm

Show 10 more replies in this thread ▼

Load 10 more comments

 Facebook Comments Plugin

[Advertise](#) | [Log In](#) | [Make HuffPost Your Home Page](#) | [RSS](#) | [Careers](#) | [FAQ](#)  
[User Agreement](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Comment Policy](#) | [About Us](#) | [About Our Ads](#) | [Contact Us](#)  
[Archive](#)

Copyright ©2016 TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. | "The Huffington Post" is a registered trademark of TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. All rights reserved. 2016©

Part of AOL Family