

Why am I in a White Privilege Curriculum discussion with the Amos Group? Is it because I graduated from College without any debt? Ahhh, no. But, but wait a minute. Why were my parents able to pay for my college expenses? Perhaps because my grandfather was able to own land. Perhaps because he was able to purchase farmsteads for his four sons and gift acreage to his two daughters?

In our “White Privilege” curriculum I found it interesting to learn that “Owner-occupied property is the single greatest factor in determining one’s wealth capacity”¹. Obviously then my parents had a head start on establishing their financial independence through gifted land ownership. With respect to African Americans, although no longer slaves, land ownership was fraught with laws leading to legal oppositions to land ownership as well as illegal oppositions including lynchings. Generational financial gains such as those experienced by my family were not and are not possible in many black families. And according to statistical studies², the fact that we were able to get college degrees means that our future generations will be more financially stable than my own and so forth down the line. This is an example of white privilege.

Another example of white privilege: Yes, I have been stopped by police for speeding – the result, I received a traffic ticket and given a deadline date to pay a fine. My female African American research assistant working with me at Rush UMC on the other hand, upon being stopped by Chicago police was taken to the local precinct to be strip searched! Yah! I was not treated in a similar manner with my traffic stop. Yes, another example of white privilege³.

What are your experiences? Have you or your family received advantages from white privilege? Let’s talk this fall with the Amos Group about how we have benefited from white privilege.

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April 2021

¹ “White Privilege Curriculum”. Part 3: the cash value of whiteness or whiteness as a tax-exempt status. Chapter 3, How Housing practices advantages whites.

² Ibid. Chapter 2, How education advantages whites.

³ Ibid. Chapter 1, How the criminal justice system advantages whites.