

Whiteness

By: Kevin Hull

I have a very difficult time talking about white privilege because I am learning and still feel uneducated on the topic. I feel that the topic of white privilege is difficult to talk about, not only for myself but for many white people because it is not that we constantly feel that we have power in our everyday life, to us it is just normal. However, it is very easy for people without privilege to recognize people with privilege, especially white privilege.

To be considered white means that you are part of the dominate group and you have all of the power in society. You have power to say what is normal and you have the power to say what is correct. As a group, white people tend to think that we are better and more capable than people of color. This leads to the idea if something benefits us, then it must benefit everyone. Also, we believe that we deserve the privileges that we have because of our hard work, when in fact we know a majority of our privileges are due to our skin color and nothing else. The fact that I can walk around at night in Springfield and not be afraid of a police officer following me or arresting me is due to my white skin and not due to my hard work.

When a crime is committed by a person of color it is wrongly projected onto his or her entire group, instead of solely on that individual. People of color that commit crimes are often labeled as gangsters or thugs that must be locked up. Meanwhile, when a similar crime is committed by a white person it is not projected onto his or whole group and they are often labeled as mentally ill people that must receive help.

I do not think that a majority of white social workers have a "real" idea of the present day racism or even an understanding of different experiences. Lacking this knowledge leads to the inability to recognize the strengths of the client. For example, a counselor working with a person of color should think deeply about racism and the emotional issues related to racism at all times.

As a future social worker I am scared of the future of social work. There are a huge amount of current social work students all around the country that are not well educated in racism or white privilege, me included.