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Letters to the Editor

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Stephen M. Marson & Donna DeAngelis, Editors

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Replies to: [White Privilege Editorial](#)

This letter is from Dr. Laura Kaplan who is not related to George Kaplan.

From: Laura Kaplan <drlekaplan@gmail.com>

Date: Friday, March 18, 2022, at 8:48 PM

To: Stephen Marson <smarson@nc.rr.com>

Subject: Re: ["BPD-L"] LGBTQ anti-discrimination resources

Hi Steve,

Yes, I re-read it when I received your note. I think it's a start in consideration of one's personal experience of privilege. I have to say I did cringe a bit that your friends were glad you brought order to the fast-food line. Yes, it was a great moment for the "aha" moment and I'm glad you had this. I noted in the story that not only was it a privilege that you felt you could go up and say something, but you also assumed people would listen. The fact that they did listen and follow instructions shows the privilege, and the fact that your friends praised you and were pleased you did rather than take the chance to do the same shows how we fall into the norm of that privilege. True, commonly if a woman, person of color, Black, indigenous, disabled (etc. etc.)

person attempted to round the crowd up people might not have listened. This still happens after all these years in meetings, with students, in other groups. My thought was I'd leave and go someplace else but of course, in an airport who knows how far it would be.

It reminded me how much we need to be willing to take risks and have these conversations and have people around us who will help us see/hear what we do not in ourselves. We need to be able to have these conversations in the classroom as well. Unfortunately, I think many teachers are not willing to take on this vulnerability, to have students be willing to note when our privileges are showing. I think this is a combination of fear about evaluations by students and administrators and fear and discomfort about vulnerability. The belief that we should be all powerful in a classroom seems to still exist. This is why I think developing and assuring a safe space in classrooms is good for us and for students, and willingness to be "called out" by students is a great and risky way to teach (and for us to learn) about that cultural humility stuff, vulnerability in communication, and being present.

Lastly, I am aware of how CRT emerged from understanding that our laws are intrinsically connected to privilege and all the isms. I am not comfortable with the suggestion that white supremacy is a psychiatric condition. If this is meant as a serious concept, it's troubling to me because it removes the responsibility from the individual. An illness is not brought on willingly by a person whereas a belief in white supremacy, like other beliefs and values is a choice. It is for this reason I do not like when I hear of professionals (or anyone) refer to racism (or any ism) as an illness or disease that has spread. Beliefs involve choices, values, words, thoughts that people have as they go through life. No medication, psychiatric or medical treatment is designed to "alleviate" symptoms or repair/fix some internal biological cause. Additionally, we already have quite enough stigma about mental health disorders and the people who live with them, why put white supremacists in this category when we already are trying to teach people that mental health disorders are not choices people make.

I appreciate your thinking about these issues. I also believe it is very much about those "aha"s that we get about our own place in the systems of

privilege. And, btw, that story about applications to grad school denied because the school was only accepting Latina/Latino students? Students have consistently complained in my classes about the old "that guy got the job only because he's Black", or "I couldn't get financial aid because it all goes to the Black students". In a univ that was 96% white I even pulled out the stats on who was getting aid and, of course, it was mostly white students. And many of us have run into conversations among employment personnel and committees saying, "we have to hire a Black person" "we must hire a woman, etc.". This leads people to assume that race or sex was the only reason a person was hired or was accepted to a program. This is unfair to that candidate. I teach that this is the institutional system being racist. If hiring were fair all along then Affirmative Action wouldn't be necessary. The racism is in how the institution employers use words as if it has nothing to do with skill, that it's only about race. Even though there is a whole list of skills and experience they are requiring, the only words used are about race. Maybe we need to consider how not only do we support privilege by our lack of insights, words, and actions, that we also encourage white supremacy to continue. When people hear that "we must hire a Black person" the anger easily turns to claims of reverse racism and is fodder for supremacists to step in.

Thanks for responding to my post, this is quite long, and I do still believe that social work needs to consider how supporting the systems and policies of privilege and supremacy such as the Title IX exemptions is not getting us towards anti-racist social work. Anti-racist, to me, leads to anti-discrimination and anti-oppression of many social identities. We get rid of one, others will topple, but we still pick and choose don't we.

Take care,
Laura

2

From: Anthony Bibus <bibus@augsborg.edu>
Date: Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 11:46 AM
To: Stephen Marson <smarson@nc.rr.com>
Subject: Re: <https://jswve.org/about/board-of-copy-editors/>

Here you go, Steve — feel free to include this as a “Letter to the Editor”:
Among the highlights for me from Stephen Marson’s and Paul Dovyak’s editorial “Exposing White Privilege by Two White Guys” was the opening quotation from Bob Dylan’s song “Only a Pawn in Their Game.” Artists and poets often express the essence of our lives in ways that are meaningful and memorable. The quotation dramatically portrays the set-up in white supremacy that encourages all who identify as white to appreciate how the structure of society favors them, even if they remain poor. At least they are members of a privileged group. For more analysis of this dynamic, see Isabel Wilderson’s *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (2020: Random House).

To undo this systemic racism, those of us who have the wind in our sails because we are white, and male can use the privileges inherent in those identities to work to dismantle white supremacy and to cultivate social justice instead.

Tony

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From: Freddie Avant <favant@sfasu.edu>
Date: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 9:47 AM
To: Stephen Marson <smarson@nc.rr.com>
Subject: RE: White privilege - teaching resources and ethics

Stephen,
Thanks for sharing!!!! Hope you are doing well.

Freddie L. Avant, Ph.D., LMSW-AP, ACSW, SSWS
Interim Dean, Office of Research and Graduates Studies &
Associate Dean and Director School of Social Work
Stephen F. Austin State University

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From: "M. Nicole Belfiore" <belfiore@umbc.edu>
Date: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 8:54 AM
To: Stephen Marson <smarson@nc.rr.com>
Subject: Re: ["BPD-L"] White privilege - teaching resources and ethics

Thank you for sharing this resource.
Nicki

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Replies to the editorial on the MSW thesis

From: "Mathew, Ray" <mathew.167@buckeyemail.osu.edu>
Date: Tuesday, February 22, 2022 at 7:41 PM
To: Stephen Marson <smarson@nc.rr.com>
Subject: Re: editorial

Steve,

This is an excellent assertion! Even from my perspective as a student completing an undergraduate thesis, I see this opportunity as vital in the formation of any social worker regardless of their desire to pursue research as a career. Through the process of writing a thesis students gain an appreciation for social work's growing knowledge base and the development of theory; without this opportunity, students are at risk of bringing stagnancy to their respective agencies or clinics in the future. I am deeply grateful to have

so many options at OSU and feel pride in being a part of an institution that enables students to explore the myriad of career opportunities social work offers. In a profession that places high value on the self-actualization of its clients, we must extend the same priority to social workers plagued by burn-out as well. I really appreciated the line, "The institutional path we should be following is maximizing choice," as this aligns with our professional ethics and goals. As a female student, I don't see a lot of disbelief that women can excel in research, but this may be underlying in the technical aspects of research rather than the foundational components I am currently engaged with. I also was raised by a female researcher so the idea of excluding women from research seems unfathomable. However, I felt that your observations regarding minority students were spot on and also show complete alignment with our ethical standards of lifting up historically disadvantaged populations and providing them the most opportunities to advance their human capital.

Best,
Ray