

# What is white privilege and how can we dismantle it?

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# Layla F Saad: Me and White Supremacy

“... As a person of white privilege, were you ever told as a child that your whiteness would work against you? That you would have to work harder to compensate for your racialized difference?

... Or was the color of your skin something that was not even discussed because it had nothing to do with what you would be able to accomplish or how you would be treated by the world? This is the essence of white privilege.”

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# What is white privilege?

Whiteness is the normal and ideal. It's used as the basis for racist racializing segregation.

- A number of studies have shown that normative whiteness is part of Finnishness and part of the Finnish national identity.

# White privilege

- Whiteness isn't about skin color only; it has to do with meanings we assign to the body and physical traits.
- Whiteness is also about power structures in society; it offers advantages to those who are recognized as white. (Keskinen, Mkwesha & Seikkula 2021)

Whiteness is common and ordinary and thus self-evident and invisible 1/2

The normativity of whiteness is part of the Finnish culture and society; we grew up and still live as members of this society, surrounded by this culture—it concerns all of us!

Whiteness is common and ordinary and thus self-evident and invisible 2/2

Recognizing normativity requires critical reflection, for example,

- on representation: who are seen and who are represented?
- On the gaze and assigning: whose views are taken into consideration and for whom are services designed?



Valmentaja 7–9, a career guidance schoolbook for grades 7–9.

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**Kun susta ei tullutkaan  
automekaanikkaa**

When you  
didn't  
become a  
car  
mechanic

**Kun susta ei tullutkaan  
lähihoitajaa**

When you  
didn't  
become a  
licensed  
practical  
nurse



# The difficulty of dealing with white privilege 1/2

People who are positioned as white often have never been forced to deal with racism and their privileged position and their involvement in generating and maintaining whiteness.

# The difficulty of dealing with white privilege 2/2

I/we/our institution involved? This often triggers strong emotions:

- a feeling of being blamed and hurt, anger,
- denial, uncomfortable feelings, silence,
- emotional reactions that are called white fragility.

# How can we dismantle white privilege? 1/2

Feelings of discomfort, guilt, uneasiness, anger, shame, etc., can help you learn and change!

# How can we dismantle white privilege? 2/2

You need to

- listen and give space to racialized people,
- self-reflect, realize things, apologize,
- fumble, confess that you're imperfect as an expert and otherwise, make mistakes and
- learn some more—it's a long process!

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# The focus is on antiracist action!

- Don't wallow in guilt (or play the victim). You have to learn to live with unpleasant feelings and imperfection and see them as something that will help you learn new things. You have to keep the focus on antiracist action!
- Be brave and move forward and take responsibility for the future!

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## Sources:

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