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Looking at White Privilege in the Eye. 7-January 2024

Some years ago, I applied for College admissions with mixed success. I was accepted at 2 schools, denied at 2 others, and then offered a full ride at one which I ultimately accepted. Over the years the normal course of becoming a member of productive society led to other pursuits. Making an application for a car loan, seeking an apartment and signing a lease, and later securing my first mortgage to purchase a house, all were met with unchallenged success. Later, applying for work in the teaching profession also proved to be a normal course of action, achieving such goals became easy in most cases. I never really gave it much thought, until I asked my friend "Dave" about his experiences. It was very different he claimed. Despite strong grades he had to first go to a junior college to continue his education, as he was not accepted at first tier schools. It was one of many obstacles for him, and he said they would continue. And with jobs, Dave claimed to rarely get a call back for an interview.

Why would Dave's experiences be so different than my own? He explained that simple things were often a real struggle, from college apps to trying to find an apartment for he and his family. How could I succeed without even giving it a second thought, where Dave could not easily do so? I believed he was clearly as smart as me and maybe more so. He certainly had a strong background of achievements and good grades. He told me that when he decided to purchase a house and had enough personal funds for a proper mortgage deposit, he found himself denied funding. How could I easily obtain a loan where Dave could not? What was the difference between Dave and myself? Why was it my applications required no extensive paperwork to banks and where Dave said he had to jump through all kinds of hoops and would still find refusals of financing? How could it be that I could live wherever I chose to and Dave's choices were so limited? Why would Dave be treated differently from me?

And then it occurred to me as there was an apparent difference between us, a cosmetic one- my skin being white, and Dave's being brown. I was of European descent and Dave's background was African. I quickly understood that the system was rigged in my favor, and quite the opposite for my friend Dave. I came to understand the meaning of privilege- white privilege being the clear difference between my hard-working friend and myself. Doors were open to me, not so for Dave, all part of an imbalanced system.

Although many of these things I talk about here occurred in the past, such situations continue to be a common contrast between white and dark-skinned people. I know of others from non-white cultures who have had similar problems as my friend Dave. Most of us who are white skinned do not give a second thought to any of these simple things at all, especially being on the privileged side of things, we don't think about others who might be treated very differently.

All of us, both white and black must look to the inequities in all these things. Though there are laws that prohibit these kinds of discriminatory acts, we must do more to achieve a common place where all people may move about freely, without fears, or looking over their shoulders for safety or acceptance. We must look at white privilege in the eye, and say no more. Everyone deserves the same opportunities based upon one's abilities.

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