

# Understanding Privilege

## OBJECTIVE

To define privilege and understand how privilege affects our lives

## GROUP AGREEMENTS

Remind participants of the Group Agreements

## INTRODUCTION (1-2 minutes)

Conversations around privilege can be difficult but they can also be very beneficial. Most of us have some degree of privilege and raising our own awareness of privilege can help us understand and challenge societal advantages and disadvantages. It can help us see who is given the benefit of the doubt and who has to work harder to prove themselves. It can help us see who is excluded from full participation and whose voices are not heard. And it provides us with an opportunity to consider the ways we can challenge unfairness and contribute toward a more equal and just society. But first it's important to understand what privilege is and what it is not.

## VIDEO (5-15 minutes)

Watch John Amaechi explain: What is White Privilege?

<https://twitter.com/bbcbitesize/status/1290969898517254145>

Afterwards discuss:

1. What is your understanding of privilege? How do the definitions and explanations presented here reinforce or challenge your understanding of privilege?
2. John Amaechi said “all privilege is about the absence of inconvenience, the absence of an impediment or challenge. As such when you have it, you really don't notice it.” Why might it be hard to notice privilege in our lives? Are there consequences from not noticing privilege?

## UNDERSTANDING PRIVILEGE ACTIVITY (10 minutes)

Materials needed: pencil and paper for each participant

Instructions:

1. Distribute paper and pencils and have each participant number their piece of paper with the numbers 1-28 down the side of their paper
2. Read each of the [privilege statements](#)
  - a. If the participant identifies with the statement and feels that it is true, they do nothing.
  - b. If the participant does not identify with the statement or feel like it is not true for their experience, they will draw one mark signifying that they do not identify with that particular privilege.
3. When finished, discuss as a group:
  - a. How did you feel doing this activity?
  - b. How was it to consider the number of tally marks you had on your paper? What does it feel like to have or not have certain privileges?
  - c. How might we respond to our individual privilege in helpful or unhelpful ways?

## REFLECTION (10 minutes)

Watch: Cracking the Codes: Dr. Joy DeGruy “A Trip to the Grocery Store”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf9QBnPK6Yg&t=8s>

Discuss as a group or personally reflect on the following:

- How did Kathleen, Joy’s sister-in-law, use her privilege in this situation? What impact did it have? Would it have been different if Joy had said the same things?
- How can we use privilege to confront unfairness and inequities?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Talk About Privilege at Work  
<https://hbr.org/2021/08/talk-about-privilege-at-work>
- Explaining White Privilege to a Broke White Person....  
[https://medschool.duke.edu/sites/default/files/2022-02/explaining\\_white\\_privilege\\_to\\_a\\_broke\\_white\\_person.pdf](https://medschool.duke.edu/sites/default/files/2022-02/explaining_white_privilege_to_a_broke_white_person.pdf)
- What is White Privilege, Really?  
<https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/fall-2018/what-is-white-privilege-really>

## EVALUATION & CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS

1. The Strengthening Diversity Community of Practice would love to hear your thoughts on how well the content supported your learning. Please complete the [PD Mini Feedback Form](#). A link to the training certificate will be made available upon submission. Facilitators are encouraged to provide participants with the link to the feedback form.
2. Participants who are a part of the Wisconsin Registry can receive credit for completing a PD Mini. Refer to the [Registry Credit Instruction Document](#) for further details.

## FACILITATOR SUGGESTIONS

1. This can be a sensitive topic where individuals are quick to get defensive. You may need to remind participants of what privilege is and isn't from John Amaechi's video. It can also be helpful to acknowledge that we can simultaneously hold privilege in some areas while being disadvantaged in others as a result of our gender, age, religion, race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, etc.
2. Think of and be prepared to share some of your own experiences with privilege.
3. If individuals are having a hard time recognizing the importance of growing our awareness of and response to privilege, then consider continuing the conversation by encouraging everyone to read one article before your next meeting and come ready to share one take-away.