

Hopkins Community Forum

Is White Privilege Real or Imagined?

October 24, 2016



White Privilege is the notion that white skin affords a group of people inherent privileges and advantages over persons of color. We will listen to a diverse panel discuss this concept, as well as the historical impact of white privilege and how it continues to affect people's behavior.

- 6:30 Welcome: Molly Cummings, Hopkins Mayor
- 6:40 Presenter: Jennifer Heimlich: *Is White Privilege Real or Imagined?*
- 7:05 Panelists: Paul Spies, Janice Downing and Henry Crosby
- 7:45 Questions and Answers

Jennifer Heimlich has been a Social Studies and AVID teacher for 14 years at Hopkins High School and Equity Coordinator for the past 11. She has been fully immersed in studying racial equity and critical race theory for more than three decades. Jennifer is personally and professionally dedicated to issues of social justice, and won the Minnesota Social Justice Teacher of the Year in 2014. She serves as Vice President of the Minnesota chapter of NAME (National Association for Multicultural Education), and teaches a course on issues of race, class, and gender at Hopkins High School. Jennifer lives in South Minneapolis with her husband, and they have three children.

Paul Spies, PhD is a Professor of Urban Secondary Education at Metropolitan State University. He is co-chair of the University Anti-Racism Leadership Team and successfully led an effort to implement a new racial issues graduation requirement for all new undergraduate students. He has co-founded and co-led the new Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color in Minnesota. He student taught in the southern African country of Lesotho in 1999 during the apartheid era, and taught African American Studies, World History and ESL American Studies in Chicago and Milwaukee area high schools. He is author of the book chapter "The Miseducation, ReEducation and Transformation of a 'White' Male Educator Working for Social Justice" (Reclaiming Democracy, 2004).

Henry Crosby's professional career experiences range from profit to non-profit, sales to social impact program services, client relationship building, coaching, community engagement and public speaking. He focused on a life of service as a transformational leader to serve as an advocate for change in the urban market. During the last fourteen years of his 40 year career, he has been professionally engaged with two national non-profit organizations working to support youth in academic and college achievement, career preparation, health and wellness services and active older adult programming. These experiences have positioned him to serve as a community policy advocate, bridge builder, role model, coach and mentor. Mr. Crosby was born and raised in Chicago and married to Stephanie Crosby for 40 years. They are blessed with two adult children, two grandsons, and a daughter-in-law.

Janice Downing has 30 years of experience as a human resources professional. She currently works as a Consultant with Common Sense Consulting, leading organizations, large and small and across industries, assessing issues and facilitating change in a systematic, cost-effective manner. She has previous Human Resources experience at Fredrikson Human Resources Consulting, Jostens, Medtronic, American Express and Cargill. She received the Minority Business Award from *The Business Journal* in 2007 and was the 2013 recipient of the Class One Supplier of the Year Award from the North Central Minority Supplier Development Council. She and her husband have three children.

A sample test of privilege based on your race (*is this true or not for you?*)

Because of my race or color...

- If I wish, I can arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
- If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
- I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
- I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the newspaper and see people of my race widely represented.
- When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color make it what it is.
- I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
- I can go into supermarkets and find the staple foods that fit with my cultural traditions; I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented; I can go into any hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.
- Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
- I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
- I can swear, or dress in secondhand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
- I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- I can remain oblivious to the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling, in my culture, any penalty for such oblivion.
- I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
- I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race.
- If a traffic cop pulls me over, or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
- I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, and children's magazines featuring the people of my race.
- I can go home from most meetings of the organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out of place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, feared, or hated.
- I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.
- I can choose public accommodations without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
- I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.
- If my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.
- I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.