

HALLMARKS OF WHITE MIDDLE CLASS CULTURE

JUSTICE

1. The police are here to protect me
2. The law will protect me
3. My neighborhood is safe for me
4. The zoning laws in my community keep my property safe

MONEY

1. Buying a home where I want to live is my goal
2. My bank is reliable and keeps my money safe
3. I can usually get a credit card with a limit that suits my life style
4. I can find an apartment where I want to live if I can afford it
5. I can get a loan for expensive items
6. Insurance will help me in case of accidents or injury

EDUCATION

1. A college education will help me get ahead
2. I can usually find a job that will fit my credentials

HEALTH

1. Health insurance will help keep me healthy
2. My doctor helps me to be healthy
3. I can afford foods that are healthy

OTHER

1. I can shop freely in a store without being accosted
2. I trust the schools my children go to
3. I can relate to TV and movie shows.
4. Travel is great
5. The food in my grocery store fits my needs
6. I rarely need to deal with people of color
7. My library has all the books I need
8. I can usually get what I need

OLOC End White Dominance has concentrated on exposing the systems that make up how we act and what we believe.

Today we are going to focus on belief systems. Belief systems are very powerful. They often dictate how we move in our lives. What we hear and are taught as children affects us for our whole lives. Most often we do not even realize we are acting out of our belief system. Large systems like law, economics, health, education, and religion, play a huge role in what we believe as well as what we will endorse and even fight for.

More importantly is our personal identity with regard to what we believe. For example, saying I am not a racist comes from the belief that I am a good person but denies the reality of the system white people get points from. We as white people benefit regardless of what we believe.

Another point is the very real belief that what I believe is common to all. This is where we will begin today. I will be speaking about white people in general but am aware that poverty makes a huge difference with regard to whether or not these beliefs are held.

Justice As we look at the beliefs in this area, if something happens that harms us, white people call the police. White people expect our neighborhoods to be safe, and for the most part that is what police and the law are for, to protect property and the people. For a minute think about what it means to someone who does not have this belief. How would we talk with them. What would we think about someone who does not report a crime to the police. How would we really communicate in a supportive way?

Money White people have a lot of beliefs about money. A bank keeps my money safe. Investing money is a good idea. If my credit is good, which it usually is, I can get credit cards and take out loans. How would you interact with someone who even with good credit cannot get a credit card. White people also believe they can find an apartment they can afford in an area they like. What would you be thinking about someone who needs to find an apartment in a certain area and cannot? Would you automatically recognize the unfairness of housing restrictions? People of color do.

Education When you think about your own level of education, do you have beliefs that everyone can have access at least to a high school diploma if they work hard enough? Did you believe that once you have a college education you would be able to find a job because of it? How do we interact with someone who has worked hard all her life and still does not seem to succeed. Does any of your belief system recognize the disparity in access to education. White people put a lot of trust in levels of education. White people think people with a college education are more valuable. We do not give the same value to people who have not gotten a higher education. How does this impact our solidarity with all Lesbians?

Health White people believe in doctors and good healthcare and with insurance white people can get - what white people need to be healthy. Where does it fit in with your belief system when someone does not go to the doctor for help? Do you realize that she may not have insurance that will help her and that she may not have enough money to pay her bill. What do you believe about people who stay away from the doctor? People on Medicaid often have bad experiences when going to the doctor, and the care is often substandard. Does this fit with your belief system about doctors being there to heal? Do you have judgements about moms who buy their kids lots of snacks, about obesity in America? When satisfying hunger, perhaps buying filling food is all she can do when fruits and vegetables are so very high priced.

What I am trying to point is...when you have a strong belief system and someone does not follow what you expect, judgements get made. These judgements are based on the **limited experience** of only hearing one belief system, the white culture system.

White people assume that someone being arrested in a store has done something wrong. That is what white people learn. It is a hallmark of our belief system and even when we learn all about racism, it may not impact our beliefs.

I think white people believe they can trust the schools their children go to. People of color have no evidence that trusting school is good for them.

Travel has a great value to white people. White people believe it is a good thing for us. White people get exposed to different cultures; we learn. Someone who has traveled has value. Do we give value to the inner city mom who stays at home and spends her time keeping her community together.

White people can find what they need at the library and much of the material will support their belief system. It goes along with the value of having an education. But how do white people feel about the lack of resources for different cultures. Does that even register as something white people need to attend to?

When white people live in an all white neighborhood and have no exposure to people of color their belief system tells them that there is nothing they can do. They can learn about racism and then what? But knowing about racism is only the beginning. Learn about the people who surround your neighborhood. Read books written by people of color. Look at your own belief system and challenge it.

WPBS (white people belief system) is very limited. White people only know one side of a very complex society and white people make judgements about other people who are not white. This is because white people have learned that our belief system is correct and white culture puts a lot of store in being right or correct.