

PRIVILEGE

By Thomas R. Cuba

White privilege. I'm white. Am I privileged?

I've thought about this question for quite a while. I had to work past my initial reflex of rejection and into actual reflection. After all, I'm an old white guy. I was the CEO and owner of a corporation, albeit a small one. We were incorporated. So, am I the problem?

Today, I offer the answer. Wait. I asked two questions. First one first: yes. I am privileged. I am privileged to have grown up in a family with parents and grandparents who instilled in me the character traits of self-reliance and hard work. They gave me goals, and Lord help me if I gave up on them. They taught me to think for myself and form my own opinions. I was privileged to go to school. I didn't think so at the time but I was also privileged to have strict teachers who would not hesitate to smack me on the back of the head for talking in class. I was privileged to be able to be in the Cub Scouts where I first learned to make an ashtray. It wasn't much, but I made it myself. I was privileged to play baseball and football and learn teamwork. It was also my privilege to fail at playing the clarinet. With all that privilege came the subsequent privilege of choosing which University I would attend and what degree I would seek. And those privileges already mentioned prepared me to support myself while in college, and not rely on money from my parents.

After graduation, I was privileged again to be accepted into the United States Navy as an officer candidate. After my service, I was privileged to be accepted to graduate school and seek advanced degrees. Somewhere along the line, the privileges I enjoyed transitioned from that offered to me by others to that which I obtained myself. Now, I am privileged to be old enough to share these thoughts with you.

But I'm still white.

Looking back on the list of privileges, I am unable to attribute any of them to being white. In every single one of the instances of privilege, there were others right next to me who weren't white. Many of those others made better ashtrays, played in the band better than I did, and were better at sports. Many earned better grades than I did and received more glowing fitness reports while in the service.

So, to the second question. Am I the problem? All of the privileges I enjoyed are also available to those who claim that I am the problem, save one. All of the privileges,

save one, are supported, and often mandated, for everyone, by our current societal structure. The only privilege that is not available to everyone is the privilege of parents and grandparents who took a direct interest in my formative years.

I can only conclude that, while clearly privileged, I am not the problem. Being white is not the problem. Being a member of any race is not the problem.

We have some massive societal problems. The origins are not racial. Most, however, not all, are behavioural.