

DECONSTRUCTING PRIVILEGE"

"WHITE

[Bill Donohue](#)

The political, educational and corporate world are flush with workshops and seminars on "white privilege." Launched mostly by men and women who are white and affluent, they epitomize the very attribute that makes them recoil.

The person most responsible for advancing the notion of white privilege is Peggy McIntosh; at 88, she is still a revered figure among left-wing activists. In the 1980s, she made a name for herself writing about the horrors of "white privilege," but it wasn't until more recent times that her contribution became mainstream. Her main argument is that white people are reluctant to admit that their status is the result of "unearned advantages" over others.

McIntosh is not content to see "white privilege" in terms of class alone; she adds a racial component. For example, she does not talk about "black privilege" or "Asian privilege," though there are countless examples of each. In her world, only white people can be "privileged."

Nor does she distinguish between white people who wait on tables and the non-white millionaires whom they serve—they are simply thrown into the same bin with Elon Musk. In short, white women who clean the toilets of Oprah Winfrey are privileged, but Oprah is not.

"My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture." McIntosh does not identify whom she oppressed or why she did so. That is too bad, because if this is an accurate account, that would make her a wicked person, and likely a criminal.

If there are “unearned” advantages, it stands to reason there must be advantages that are earned. But she never says a word about them. That’s because in her mind, all *white* advantages are “unearned.” This would include those who came from nothing, worked hard and succeeded.

The most specific instances of white privilege that McIntosh identifies were listed in a 1989 article she wrote. Here are a few examples.

“I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.”

Perhaps she is not familiar with the Chinese. Unlike other Asians, no matter where they live in the world, they *choose* to segregate, preferring to live in Chinatowns. So much for “living with one’s own kind” being an example of “white privilege.”

“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 want to live.”

Are we to believe that Nigerians, who are among the most educated and wealthy of all Americans, are denied this choice? The average white person couldn’t tell the difference between a black person from Nevada and a black person from Nigeria, so how can it be that Nigerians have no problem living where they want?

“I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.”

This has nothing to do with race—it is entirely a function of economics. Black middle-class suburbanites do not live in fear of crime—lower-income blacks do.

“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.”

Let’s be honest. When a presidential candidate says to the world that I am only going to pick a “woman of color” as my running mate, and I will only pick a black woman to be on the Supreme Court, why is it so surprising that people think this way?

What typically drives people like McIntosh to talk about white privilege is guilt.

Born Elisabeth Vance Means, her father was a trained scientist who became the head of Bell Laboratories electronic switching department. He owned and sold patents on many lucrative technologies, and amassed a small fortune in doing so. This enabled him to raise his daughter in a plush New Jersey suburb, a town where the median income was four times the national average.

Sounds like there was nothing “unearned” about his status—he earned every penny. But for her, things were different.

She attended George School, which today costs about \$50,000 a year to attend; \$73,000 for boarders. She then went to a famous finishing school, Radcliff, and from there she attended another private school, the University of London. She received her Ph.D. in English from Harvard. When she married in 1964, her wedding was highlighted in the *New York Times*’ social register.

As William Ray put it, “In other words, Peggy McIntosh was born into the very cream of America’s aristocratic elite, and has remained ensconced there ever since.” Another author who tracked her life, Graham Stewart, aptly noted that she lived “a pampered existence and had so little contact outside her Harvard-Radcliff bubble that she assumed all whites enjoy the same advantages as her...”

Guilt can immobilize some people, but in McIntosh’s case it

stimulated her to indoctrinate white people, convincing them of their “unearned advantages.” To say she exploited her status with precision would be an understatement. Indeed, she is in a class of her own.